

Lovecraft Studies 12



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Lovecraft's Concept of "Background"

by Steven J. Mariconda

The seemingly antithetical elements of cosmic outsidership and New England local color in H. P. Lovecraft's fiction may be traced, paradoxically enough, to the same source: his philosophy of cosmic indifferentism. The universe was to him a purposeless mechanism, one which mankind, with its limited sensory apparatus, can never fully comprehend. The cosmic horror of Lovecraft's fiction—the horror of unknowable forces or beings which sweep men aside as indifferently as men do ants—stems from this philosophy. Though Lovecraft evidently found intellectual and imaginative satisfaction in this bleak position, one inevitably wonders how he sustained himself emotionally. In fact, it was the same sceptical analysis behind Lovecraft's metaphysics which led him to the concept of relative values and to his one great source of emotional fulfillment: his "background", the rich heritage of New England tradition and culture which we find so often used as the setting for his tales of cosmic intrusion. The concept of background is a central one in Lovecraft's life and work, and our understanding of both may be increased by examining it.

As is true with most delvings into Lovecraft's thought, we should begin with his metaphysics. The seeds of the latter seem to have been, in a sense, innate—he was a born analyst, by nature inclined to approach the world on an intellectual level. Taking an early interest in the sciences, he was dabbling in chemistry at age eight, and he equally early applied the same sort of rigorous analysis to religion. At five years Lovecraft was asking if God was a myth in the manner of Santa Claus; soon after he was questioning his Sunday School teachers so vehemently that they were undoubtedly glad to see him go when his mother allowed him to discontinue attendance at age twelve. By seventeen, following on the heels of profound study of astronomy and other natural sciences, he had adopted the essentials of his philosophical orientation, following Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius; that of a mechanistic materialist who saw the cosmos as "a meaningless affair of endless cycles of alternate electronic condensation & dispersal—a thing without beginning, permanent direction, or ending, & consisting wholly of blind force operating according to fixed & eternal patterns inherent in entity."¹ Such an outlook eliminated the possibility of deity and afterlife, but the positivist Lovecraft found he could come to no other conclusion: science provided no evidence to support such beliefs, instead

¹Lovecraft, *Selected Letters* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1965-76; 5 vols.), II.124-25. Further citations abbreviated SL.

explaining their origins with anthropological and psychological theories.

Lovecraft's philosophy thus left him adrift in a universe that cared neither for him nor anything else, an emotionally unpleasant situation at best. Joseph Wood Krutch, in *The Modern Temper* (1929)—a volume Lovecraft thought of highly—expressed the problem this way:

The world of modern science is one in which the intellect alone can rejoice. The mind leaps, and leaps perhaps with a sort of elation, through the immensities of space, but the spirit, frightened and cowed, longs to have once more above its head the inverted bowl beyond which may lie whatever paradise its desires may create. . . . Thus man seems caught in a dilemma which his intellect has devised.²

The Providence dreamer's mind certainly did leap with elation through space, but nonetheless realized that his emotional stability would have to be found elsewhere.

The same sense of rationality or objectivity which caused Lovecraft's emotional dilemma, however, also provided its solution. Though human concerns were of no importance to the universe at large, this need not mean that they were of no value to the individual psyche:

I have the cynic's and the analyst's inability to recognise the difference in value between the two types of consciousness-impacts, *real* and *unreal*. . . . [and] to retain the illusion that their actual vast physical difference gives them any difference in value as psychological agents impinging on man's consciousness. My one standard of value is imaginative suggesting-power or symbolising-quality.³

Thus we have Lovecraft's pragmatic adoption of relative values: "What gives us relative painlessness and contentment we may arbitrarily call 'good' & vice versa."⁴ The necessity of such an adoption amidst the bleak cosmos of modern science was also evident to Krutch:

The most ardent lover of truth, the most resolute determination to follow nature no matter to what black abyss she may lead, need not blind one to the fact that many of the lost illusions had, to speak the language of science, a survival value.⁵

Lovecraft's notion that "the satisfaction of our own emotions is the

²Joseph Wood Krutch, *The Modern Temper: A Study and a Confession* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1929; rpt. New York: Harvest Books, 1959), 12-13.

³SL III.125-26.

⁴SL II.356,

⁵*Modern Temper*, 13.

one solid thing which we can ever get out of life"⁶ need not lead us to believe that he was a hedonist or amoralist, for the notion was moderated by his Apollonian insistence that such satisfaction might take place only by the "intelligent manipulation" of the "raw material" of emotion.⁷ Lovecraft, then, drew upon those emotions which gave him pleasure but *did not* conflict with his intellectual perception, while rationally minimizing the effects of their unpleasant counterparts.

But where did Lovecraft, who found human beings no more or less interesting than any other phenomenon, find his emotional sustenance? The answer, documented explicitly in innumerable letters and implicitly in the bulk of his fiction, poetry, and essays, is his "background", a term he used to describe his cultural heritage in its very broadest dimension.

No one thinks or feels or appreciates or lives a mental-emotional-imaginative life at all, except in terms of the artificial reference-points supply'd him by the enveloping body of race tradition and heritage into which he is born. We form an emotionally realisable picture of the external world, and an emotionally endurable set of illusions as to value and direction in existence, solely and exclusively through the arbitrary concepts and folkways bequeathed to us through our traditional culture-stream.⁸

Lovecraft saw his background not merely as simple traditions passed down from father to son. Aside from components normally associated with tradition such as social customs, attitudes, and institutions, he described background as including "material from my immediate blood-ancestry and personal milieu—habit-patterns, spontaneous likes & dislikes, standards & associations, geographical points of view. . . . These things are physical phenomena—gland functionings & nerve patterns."⁹ This last implies something beyond the mere influences of Lovecraft's upbringing: the action of the environmental factors upon his heredity. He felt that his ancestors' agrestic lifestyles had, to some extent, affected his psychological make-up. "My instincts," he wrote, "were formed by the functioning of a certain line of germ-plasm through a certain set of geographical & social environmenting conditions . . . & so I continue to react spontaneously & unconsciously in the manner of my forefathers, liking the same superficial forms & types & attitudes they liked, except when such things conflict with the fundamental laws of truth & beauty."¹⁰

As far as specifics go, Lovecraft saw his background as consisting of layers of different intensity, most distantly his Aryan heritage, followed in increasing strength by his Western-European heritage, his Teuton-Celtic heritage, his Anglo-Saxon heritage, and his Anglo-American heritage.¹¹ As is well known, Lovecraft especially revered the life of the eighteenth cen-

⁶SL III.21.

⁷Lovecraft to A. Galpin, 20 Jan. 1933 (ms., John Hay Library, Brown University).

⁸SL III.207.

⁹SL III.331.

¹⁰SL II.333.

¹¹SL III.208.

tury of old and New England. His father's forebears were English country-gentry, or so he liked to believe. Lovecraft was only the second generation of his branch of his family in the United States; and at times he whimsically claimed that as the grandson of an Englishman he was by rights a British citizen.¹² His mother's ancestry was a long line of New England Yankees, the first of whom crossed the Atlantic at the astoundingly early date of 1630 and settled in Watertown, Massachusetts.¹³

If the degree of effect of the hereditary factor upon Lovecraft's psychological make-up is debatable, there can be no question of the very real influence of his early environment, which greatly contributed to his acute sense of background. Born in Providence, Rhode Island, and raised there from three years of age, Lovecraft always felt a sort of mystic identification with it. The colonial atmosphere of the town, founded in 1636 by Roger Williams, was then preeminent—especially so in the East Side neighborhood where Lovecraft grew up. Among the antique public buildings of the city were the Colony House (1761), the College Edifice of Brown University (1770), the Brick Schoolhouse (1769), the Market House (1773), the First Baptist Church (1775), the St. John's and Round Top churches (both c. 1810), the Golden Ball Inn (1783), and the old Brick Row warehouses (1816).¹⁴ There were also many private residences and mansions dating from 1750 onward, and a few—farmhouses overtaken by the city, primarily—built before that date.

As S. T. Joshi has written, it is difficult for us to realize just how distant we are from Lovecraft's time;¹⁵ this is particularly true regarding the milieu of the Providence Lovecraft knew in youth. There many vestiges of past life survived. Houses were still lit by gaslight. The city's horse-drawn public transport was discontinued only in 1894; and in 1897 over six hundred schooners and several barques still entered the port of Providence, docking at the waterfront at the base of College Hill.¹⁶

Added to the effect of the town itself was that of the environment of the house where he grew up. Whipple Phillips's mansion had been built in the 1870s, but contained many relics of the later 1700s. Most important among the latter was a large library of long-s'd books stored in the attic trunk-room, whence from six years onward Lovecraft often went by candlelight to immerse himself in the atmosphere of the colonial era. There he thrived on the work of Addison, Dryden, Johnson, Pope, Steele, and Swift. His interest did not stop there, however. He was also familiar with more obscure British and American writers, such as John Oldham (1653-83), Samuel

¹²L. Sprague de Camp, *Lovecraft: A Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 21. Typically, de Camp does not document where he got this information.

¹³SL III.363.

¹⁴SL II.108.

¹⁵S. T. Joshi, *A Reader's Guide to H. P. Lovecraft* (Mercer Island, WA: Starport House, 1982), 7.

¹⁶SL IV.65; *State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century: A History*, Vol. II, ed. Edward Fields (Boston & Syracuse: Mason, 1902), 556, 488.

Garth (1661-1719), Thomas Parnell (1679-1718), Edward Young (1683-1765), Thomas Tickell (1686-1740), James Thomson (1700-48), Timothy Dwight (1752-1817) and Joel Barlow (1754-1812), making him something of a specialist in the literature of the period.

Lovecraft himself began to look at the world from the perspective of the Georgian era. He took as his model for composition *The Reader* (1797), by Abner Alden, who had taught in an East Kingston, R.I., school at the turn of the century.¹⁷ He began writing the date two hundred years earlier, and wrote with the archaic long "s".¹⁸

Defending his emotional kinship with the period in later life, he explained its lure in more impersonal terms:

What the eighteenth century really was, was the *final* phase of that perfectly unmechanised aera which as a whole gave us our most satisfying life. . . . Its hold upon moderns is due mainly to its *proximity* . . . it is the nearest to us of all the purely pre-mechanical periods; the only one with which we have any semblance of *personal* contact (surviving houses and household effects in large quantities; association [for Americans] with high historic tension; fact that we can still talk with old men who in their youth talked with living survivors; vestigial customs and speech-forms in greater number than from earlier periods, etc., etc.) and whose ways are in any manner familiar to us save through sheer archaeological reconstruction.¹⁹

This proximity Lovecraft felt most potently in youth, both in the houses, churches, and brick sidewalks of Providence, and the conservative mores of his family. It served to create in him a strong sense of background which would last throughout his life.

Aside from the purely old New England ways of life, there was also a strong agrestic or pastoral component in Lovecraft's upbringing; and thus was his ideal of the English squire expanded to the notion of that of gentleman-farmer. Providence was at the turn of the century a city of only 175,000;²⁰ and Lovecraft's house was not far from the wooded countryside, where he loved to wander. In his neighborhood were several small farmsteads which strongly affected him emotionally, and he later boasted that he "knew the old New England country as well as if I had been a farmer's boy". More astonishing is the little-known fact that Whipple Phillips himself pastured a milk cow and planted potatoes and corn on the property of 454 Angell Street.²¹ Lovecraft avidly read all the old Farmer's Almanacs he could find around the house—he continued to be a collector throughout his life—

¹⁷State of Rhode Island, 357.

¹⁸SL II.107.

¹⁹SL III.50.

²⁰Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed. (1910), s.v. "Providence".

²¹SL III.217.

time—and became devoted to the pastorals of Thomson and Bloomfield, of Virgil and Hesiod.

Lovecraft valued his background highly, and the concept figures greatly in his thought. His racialist stance, for example, was partly based in his wish to keep his culture-stream—his one last emotional anchor—safe from erosion by an influx of foreign tradition.²² More importantly for our purposes, background played an important part in Lovecraft's thoughts on the nature of art:

My theory of aesthetics is a compound one. To me beauty as we know it, consists of two elements; one absolute and objective, and based on rhythm and symmetry; and one relative and subjective, based on traditional associations with the hereditary culture-stream of the beholder. The second element is probably strongest with me, since my notions of enjoyment are invariably bound up with strange recallings of the past.²³

This passage has important repercussions in both Lovecraft's fiction and poetry. There is, in his finest work, an adherence to the traditional values of simplicity, proportion, and restraint; in these qualities we may trace the influence of the ancient classics filtered through the art of the Georgian age. But more explicitly, the substance of Lovecraft's art is often concerned with "recallings of the past".

Lovecraft's poetry is an obvious example. His work in this area has often been condemned as soulless imitation of Augustan verse. This is true to a point, as Lovecraft himself realized:

I wrote only as a means of re-creating around me the atmosphere of my beloved 18th century favourites . . . everything succumbed to my one intense purpose of thinking & dreaming myself back into that world of periwigs & long s's which for some odd reason seemed to me the normal world.²⁴

Lovecraft here admits that he wrote much of his early poetry merely as an exercise in recapturing the ethos of his background. This is true in both its form (primarily rhymed couplets in the manner of Pope) and, often, in its subject matter; examples include "On a New England Village Seen by Moonlight" (1913), "An American to Mother England" (1916), and "Old Christmas" (1917). The last, a seemingly interminable 324-line paean to the traditions of his ancestors, begins:

²²Cf. SL III.207: "A native culture-heritage is the most priceless and indispensable thing any person has—and he who weakens the grasp of a people upon their inheritance is most nefariously a traitor to the human species."

²³SL II.229.

²⁴SL II.315.

Would that some Druid, wise in mystic lore,
 Might waft me backward to the scenes of yore;
 Midst happier years my wandering soul detain,
 and let me dwell in ANNA's virtuous reign:
 Warm in the honest glow of pure content,
 And share the boons of rustic merriment.
 Awake, Pierian Muse! and call to view
 The snow-clad groves and plains my grandsires knew . . .²⁵
 (ll. 7-13)

Happily, Lovecraft largely shed his affected approach to poetry in the mid-1920s. It is ironic that when he eventually composed a verse on his concept of "Background", in the *Fungi from Yuggoth* (1929-30), he did so not in his beloved Augustan couplets but in a simple and understated sonnet form.

The background concept can help us explicate another of the *Fungi*, "Continuity". Lovecraft writes that certain objects hint "of locked dimensions harbouring years gone by" (l. 7), concluding:

It moves me most when slanting sunbeams glow
 On old farm buildings set against a hill,
 And paint with life the shapes which linger still
 From centuries less a dream than this we know.
 In that strange light I feel I am not far
 From the first mass whose sides the ages are.²⁶
 (ll. 9-14)

Lovecraft at such times felt an almost mystical sense of *identity* with his native and hereditary tradition. One such instance was his first sight, from high ground, of the colonial seaport Marblehead, Massachusetts, in 1922:

In a flash all the past of New England—all the past of old England—all the past of Anglo-Saxondom and the Western World—swept over me and identified with me the stupendous totality of all things in such a way as it never did before and never will again.²⁷

Note the emphasis on the sense of unity, the feeling that one may "merge oneself with the whole historic stream and be wholly emancipated from the transient & the ephemeral".²⁸ This acute realization of background, typically incited by regional scenic vistas, is what Lovecraft labelled "continuity".

Turning to Lovecraft's fiction, we may better understand his use of realistic local color when we recall his emphasis on the importance of back-

²⁵Lovecraft, *Fungi From Yuggoth and Other Poems* (New York: Ballantine, 1971), 4-5. Further citations abbreviated as FY.

²⁶FY 137-38.

²⁷SL III.126.

²⁸SL III.220.

ground in aesthetics. An author, he felt, "does best in founding his elements of incident & colour on a life & background to which he has a real & deep-seated relation."²⁹ As he viewed it, the creative process is more natural—and the result more powerful—when an author uses the raw materials he knows best: the social customs, attitudes, institutions, geographical points of view, and other components of his background. The subjective or associative component is also vital to the work from the reader's perspective—the latter may relate more poignantly to the events of a tale when realistic detail is used, for such details will be instantly recognizable and set off a chain of personal associations in his mind.

The New England background figures in many of Lovecraft's stories to some extent. In a few (such as "From Beyond" [1920]), it has little or no role in the tale. For the most part, though, the local color of the region plays a pivotal part in the proceedings. The first tale to exploit the approach was "The Picture in the House" (1920),³⁰ whose first paragraph suggests that in certain isolated dwellings common in desolate areas of the region, "strength, solitude, grotesqueness, and ignorance combine to form the perfection of the hideous". The narrator of the tale is forced by a storm to seek shelter in such a dwelling—despite his bias, acquired from "legends" he has heard, against such places. He finds that the interior, with its relics of Revolutionary days, would but for its condition be "a collector's paradise". The occupant soon descends from the floor above; with his ragged clothing and "weak voice full of fawning respect" which speaks "an extreme form of Yankee dialect", he at first seems merely a New England eccentric. We soon discover, though, that he is nothing less than a cannibal who is several hundreds of years old.

In this tale we see Lovecraft using elements of his background in the local color of the story. In later works he would make yet more extensive use of the history, folklore, speech, dress, mannerisms, beliefs, and topography of New England and its people. Tales such as "The Shunned House" (1924) and *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1927) are inextricably intertwined with regional history. The latter is mixed so deftly with the events of these tales that scholarship has not yet been fully able to decide exactly what is fact and what fiction.

"The Colour out of Space" (1927), "The Dunwich Horror" (1928), "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930), "The Shadow over Innsmouth" (1931), "The Haunter of the Dark" (1935), and others also make pivotal use of New England locales. They describe, with an insight only a native can possess, the loneliness and grandeur of the primal countryside, as well as villages spanning from the "ridiculously old"³¹ Dunwich to contemporary Providence.

Special note should be made of Lovecraft's use of regional characters. It has often been said that Lovecraft was unable to draw convincing charac-

²⁹ SL II.100.

³⁰ Lovecraft, *The Dunwich Horror and Others* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1984), 116-24. Further citations abbreviated as DH.

³¹ DH 158.

ters, but this is belied by many of his rural portraits. The farmer Nahum Gardner in "The Colour out of Space"³² is one among many vivid Lovecraftian figures. One who has "always walked uprightly in the Lord's ways, so far as he knew", we can feel nothing but horror as this simple man and his family are destroyed by an alien and incomprehensible force which alights upon his "trim white . . . house amidst its fertile grounds and orchards". Note also the use here of local customs as a narrative device; for soon after the advent of the strange meteorite the Gardners become "far from steady in their churchgoing or their attendance at the various social events of the countryside".

Few authors have used dialect as felicitously as Lovecraft did at his best; the finest example of this perhaps being the speech of the aged Zadok Allen of "Innsmouth".³³ Allen, possessed of "a great tendency to philosophise in sententious village fashion", speaks in a distinctive (even if now extinct) grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation of the region. This is in opposition to the ticket agent at the beginning of the tale, "whose speech shewed him to be no local man". Dialect also plays an important role in the verisimilitude of "The Picture in the House", "The Dunwich Horror", and "The Colour out of Space".

How can we reconcile the seemingly disparate elements of cosmic horror and background in Lovecraft's fiction? The answer may be found in his explanation of the difference between his brand of cosmicism and that of his fellow fantaisistes Clark Ashton Smith and Donald Wandrei. The latter two authors often began and wholly conducted their tales in other dimensions or the far reaches of space; but Lovecraft felt his cosmic voyages were most affecting when shown relative to the small realm of mankind, and to New England in particular. Again he refers to background as the basis of his excursions, this time not merely emotional but also imaginative:

I recognise the impossibility of any correlation of the individual and the universal without the immediate visible world as a background—or starting-place for a system of outward-extending points of reference. I cannot think of any individual as existing except as part of a pattern—and the pattern's most visible and tangible areas are of course the individual's immediate environment; the soil and culture-stream from which he springs, and the milieu of ideas, impressions, traditions, landscapes, and architecture through which he must necessarily peer in order to reach the "outside" . . . I begin with the individual and think outward—appreciating the sensation of spatial and temporal liberation only when I can scale it against the known terrestrial scene. . . . With me, the very quality of being cosmically sensitive breeds an exaggerated attachment to the familiar and immediate—Old Providence, the woods and hills, the ancient ways and thoughts of New England.³⁴

³²DH 53-82.

³³DH 303-67.

³⁴SL III.220-21.

The cosmic vistas of Lovecraft's tales, then, are made even more meaningful when juxtaposed with the solid, familiar scenes and traditions of his regional background. The terrible alienness of Lovecraft's outside beings and realms is emphasized by their antipodal difference from the narratives' settings.

Let us now briefly retrace our steps. Lovecraft's bleak philosophy, born of his scientific disposition, inspired the cosmic horror of his tales. It also led him to the concept of relative values, which reinforced the role of his background—tradition in its largest sense—as an emotional anchor. His aesthetic sense was satisfied most by art which conjured associative images from the fund of his background; and he believed an artist must use his background as raw material for his art for the latter to be truly powerful. Thus did he choose New England local color as the basis of the realism he thought vital to the effectiveness of the weird tale. Aside from adding to the believability of his narratives, Lovecraft felt that the homely regional background best contrasted with his vast cosmic vistas, making the horror of the latter even more poignant.

To summarize the essence of background itself, we can surely do no better than Lovecraft himself did:

I can never be tied to raw, new things,
For I first saw the light in an old town,
Where from my window huddled roofs sloped down
To a quaint harbour rich with visionings.
Streets with carved doorways where the sunset beams
Flooded old fanlights and small window-panes,
And Georgian steeples topped with gilded vanes—
These were the sights that shaped my childhood dreams.

Such treasures, left from times of cautious leaven,
Cannot but loose the hold of flimsier wraiths
That flit with shifting ways and muddled faiths
Across the changeless walls of earth and heaven.
They cut the moment's thongs and leave me free
To stand alone before eternity.³⁵

³⁵FY 134. I would like to thank David E. Schultz and Sam Gafford for their suggestions regarding this essay.

Some Repetitions on the Times

by H. P. Lovecraft

This is to be a blunt endeavour to emphasise some basic and desperate truths about the present economic impasse—swelling ever so little the chorus now besieging the ears of our incoming legislators. It will be remarked that nothing in these paragraphs has not been suggested several hundred times before, but such a remark can hardly be taken as a proper objection. In social and political crises no idea or perspective can gain an adequate hearing except through insistent echoes, and today there cannot be too many voices raised in exactly similar outlines of our civilisation's real plight, and exactly similar demands for a brushing aside of irrelevant precedents and preconceptions in facing that plight.

Only reiteration will help. The realities have been starkly and powerfully stated by competent individuals again and again, yet official thought and legislation very largely continue in their sluggish, superficial course, motivated by catchwords and conceptions left from former ages whose basic industrial and financial conditions no longer exist. For several generations the man-displacing effect of the machine has been realised by a few, yet the momentary ability of new industries to absorb displaced labour was enough to blind nearly everyone to the consequences inevitable after the end of this plainly temporary absorption. Even when the end did come, the majority refused to realise it. It took the repetitions and inculcations of the "technocracy" survey—a tremendously valuable and significant movement despite its handicaps of poor leadership and extravagant conclusions—to give the general public a really vivid glimpse of the permanently altered set of conditions around us.

Thus we may see the need for a repeated presentation of the whole dismal picture in all its familiar outlines and implications. Its desperation—and the probably dire results of its neglect or subordination—must be literally hammered into the popular consciousness until increasing clamour reaches the legislator and forces him to face the facts and take drastic action concerning them. Our governing body must be brought to understand that the time is past for cherishing abstract institutions and deferring to purely theoretical ideals such as "rugged individualism", "unregulated private property", "sound money", "free initiative", "legitimate profits", "economic laws", "balanced budgets", and so on. These institutions and ideals have to do with *methods*, but not with the realities underlying them—and today it is with the naked realities that we are having to deal.

The real problem is to accomplish certain ends *irrespective of methods*, as is done in such other emergencies as warfare and pioneering. A certain

morale is to be preserved, and certain resources are to be distributed where they will do the most good. During the late war there was no talk of theoretical technicalities (or if so, it was justly reprehended) when a definite thing was to be done. If a certain number of men in a certain military area needed a certain amount of food, clothing, or other supplies, that amount was produced somehow—by drastic commandeering if necessary—and delivered where it was required. Still farther back in history, the rigid apportionment of labour and resources in the Plymouth colony—and traces of it in later American colonies—shews again that drastic and concrete action is not (despite the perfervid rhetoric of certain distinguished and plutocratic Elder Statesmen) incompatible with the real American tradition as distinguished from the artificial finance-and-business tradition built up during the myopic nineteenth century.

Today the country has plenty of resources and productive facilities, so that enough exists to support the entire population very comfortably—and without any of the destructive absolute equalisation demanded by ruthless communists. The problem is to get the existing material to those who need it—and the obstacles in the way are the theories which protect mere methods and abstract institutions and ideals.

We all realise that the existing equilibrium must not be disrupted by a violent overthrow of all the safeguards of property in moderate quantities. It is only increasing an evil if those who have a few resources left are to be shorn of their pittance and thrown into the plight of the destitute. But we also realise that a prodigious amount of concrete rectification can be accomplished by arbitrarily distributive methods productive of no physical or cultural hardship to anyone—measures which are really very moderate and conservative when judged in relation not to abstract theory but to human needs and cultural standards.

This is what the controllers of our political destiny must be made by popular clamour to see—that what is to be sought is not the preservation of a parcel of commercial methods and economic ideals, but a rational apportionment of resources and a continuation of our hereditary way of life as regards art, ethics, intellectual perspective, and the niceties of personal existence. We must stop thinking primarily in terms of "money" and "business"—both artificial things—and begin to think increasingly in terms of the actual resources and products on which "money" and "business" are based. In terms of these, of the human beings to whom they are to be distributed, and of the cognate human values which make the accidents of life and consciousness worth enduring.

Part of the task of our repetitions must be to convince the holders of power of something which the farther-sighted philosopher long ago realised—namely, that the present collapse is not merely a transient depression from which automatic recovery is possible. This, we hope, may be accomplished through the soberly disinterested efforts of that Columbia group of energy-surveyors under Prof. Rautenstrauch from whom the more sensational Scott "technocrats" have now been weeded. It is by this time virtually clear to everyone save self-blinded capitalists and politicians that the

old relation of the individual to the needs of the community has utterly broken down under the impact of intensively productive machinery. Baldly stated—in a highly mechanised nation there is no longer enough work to be done, under any conceivable circumstances, to require the services of the entire capable population if each individual is worked to his maximum (even an humane and rational maximum) capacity.

This is an unbeatable truth around which no amount of sophistry can get. It means that from now on no person of average ability and willingness can be given a guarantee of food, clothing, and shelter in exchange for work performed. There is not enough, under a laissez-faire system, for all to do; hence a residue of the permanently unemployable, increasing as mechanical ingenuity increases, must always be with us. We have the three alternatives of feeding this residue charitably, starving it into a civilisation-ending revolt, or restoring it to self-respecting effectiveness by artificially spreading work. Of these alternatives the third is the obvious choice—but, since it involves a regulation or minimisation of private profit, it can be adopted only through a facing of realities and a wholesome repudiation of empty political and economic theories. To make the moulders of policy realise this, our repetitions must be insistent, sober, and well-informed.

We must also repeat endlessly the very real danger of annihilative revolution which, in case of indefinitely delayed relief, lurks in the offing despite the truly astonishing degree of popular patience exhibited thus far. Men cannot be starved or buffeted about perpetually without protest—and when a person has nothing to gain from an existing social order, he feels free to act against it. If a sufficiently large minority become convinced that an honest willingness to work under the present system will no longer gain them a living, they cannot be expected to do otherwise than strike out for another system. Even now the anti-legal acts of the Iowa farmers—who prevent mortgage foreclosures through mob intimidation—are highly significant.

It is of course true—despite the bolshevistic howlings in foreign centres like New York City—that what the overwhelming bulk of discontented Americans would aim for in a revolution would not be bolshevism, but merely a new system of state control of property ensuring a decent apportionment of resources within the existing civilisation. It is not, however, equally certain that this is what they would get if they were actually stirred up to decisive and successful action.

Americans know little of the technique of social revolt, hence administrative leadership would inevitably fall into the hands of aliens already highly trained in that respect, and harbouring altogether different ideas regarding proper objects. Once the avalanche was started, it would be difficult for the conservative but untrained revolutionists to preserve their rational programme against the astute machinations of the imported leaders with their utterly repulsive ideals derived from the slave-heritage of Continental Europe's under-men.

As the rational Russian revolution of Kerensky, Karnilov, and Milinkov became at last the tragic cataclysm of Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin, so might a well-meant farmer's and mechanic's uprising in America become an orgy of slaughter and cultural destruction. It must not be forgotten, in this connexion, that the alien leaders of such an orgy would have powerful support from a superficially impressive and dangerously articulate American element in sympathy with them; the neurotic "intelligentsia" which includes persons of substantial achievement in non-political fields—authors, critics, and scientists like Dreiser, Anderson, Edmund Wilson, and V. F. Calverton. Clearly, it would pay to go to almost any length to avoid even the start of an upheaval of any sort—and repetition must not fail to emphasise this.

Nor should we neglect to repeat the details of the dark picture presented by this age. To use a very conservative estimate, about 12,000,000 people in the United States are unemployed; while a much larger number—perhaps half the entire population—are suffering hardship to a greater or less degree as a result of reduced income, unsatisfactory employment, or the burden of assisting unemployed relatives. Of the unemployed, an undoubted majority are persons of ample skill, experience, and capacity, prepared to offer in exchange for decent wages certain definite services which have hitherto been useful and necessary. They are not less capable than the average run of persons still employed, but are merely the unlucky ones in the constant competition for the insufficient number of positions now available. A natural upturn in the current of business would restore work to many, but not to a great remaining bulk. Mechanical and commercial efficiency has arranged more and more methods—many of them devised since the dawn of the depression as aids in saving private profit—whereby all the needs of an unlimited consuming public can be supplied through the services of fewer and fewer human workers.

These unemployed persons are for the most part still comparatively young and in reasonable health. They have diligently sought for work not only in their own respective lines but in all other lines which they feel they have any chance at all of competently following; and in general tend to be the sincere, industrious, and persevering type usually regarded as assets to the country and to their local communities. Being accustomed to consider themselves necessary parts of the industrial system, whose labour has a real and definite value, they have developed a high degree of self-respect; while the assurance of at least a modest income has given them a wholesome, comfortable, and in many cases tasteful standard of living. This standard of living is now so deeply ingrained that it cannot be lightly abandoned—indeed, it would be a calamity if it were abandoned, since its good effect on the tone of the whole nation's civilisation is so ample.

Its holders expect certain normal rewards from life, and in return are staunch sustainers of the peaceful system of law and order which has until lately made such rewards possible. They feel that their contributions to society ought to earn for them, and for the young, aged, and infirm persons dependent upon them, a definite material security and spiritual dignity. When, through no fault or diminished capacity of theirs, the assurance of

that security and dignity seems about to be withdrawn, they have a right to demand that vigorous steps be taken to restore it. They believe that it is a duty of government to try to establish—by any means whatever—a degree of balance which will once more make the normal prizes guaranteed results of industrial willingness and ability.

The psychological effect of the present catastrophe on these sturdy and competent unemployed—for whom the securing of money has suddenly become an impossibility—is disastrous and far-reaching. Faced in most cases with actual and unaccustomed hardships, and in any case with a preying anxiety about the future, they have on their hands an aimless idleness (for only the topmost strata are trained to the intellectually and aesthetically profitable use of leisure) which vastly aggregates their mounting worry about food, clothing, shelter, and the maintenance of decent standards.

The higher in the cultural scale the victim is, the more heavily does his new destitution press upon him and bewilder him—and many of great refinement and cultivated mode of life have been engulfed. The anguish attendant upon the loss of cherished possessions and habits which have become dominant landmarks of existence is probably the most thoroughly poignant which any human being can endure, and it is not alone the former possessor of luxuries who suffers through the present debacle. As previously mentioned, a large majority of the unemployed possess deeply seated standards which, though far from sybaritic, nevertheless indicate self-respect and well-regulated social experience—and which must be almost wholly relinquished amidst the universal discomfort and distress of today. Many accustomed to the social amenities are now obliged to live in unutterably depressing and dispiriting quarters—with an insufficient and unpalatable food-supply, and with eviction and unthinkable horrors of starvation and exposure staring them in the face. Desperation or deterioration of morale are under such circumstances almost inevitable. With nothing to enjoy or hope for, the victims are confronted by a choice between suicide and beggary—the proudest and most potentially valuable individuals often choosing the former.

That this condition harms the national tradition as well as the individuals concerned can hardly be disputed. The dominantly commercial civilisation of boom times was itself an anti-cultural influence, and this addition of a materially degrading element greatly abets the decline. When families of taste are no longer able to maintain the dignified and independent form of life which has hitherto distinguished them, and when even the essentials of a neat personal appearance are made impossible for formerly fastidious multitudes, the general standard is bound to suffer. High levels of living are hard-won enough in any case, and tend to disintegrate alarmingly when existence becomes a sordid, aimless, and apparently helpless struggle. Ethics perish along with good manners when people begin to feel that there is nothing to live or fight for any more.

Naturally, some steps have been taken toward the relief of the people's more elemental woes; but their ironic inadequacy is easy to see. In many cities the artificial work created for the jobless is wholly unsuited to

most of the victims concerned, and far too fragmentary to give any of its recipients a genuine living. Usually, too, the process of application for such work is rendered infinitely painful and humiliating by the personal catechisms imposed, and by the general sense of defeat and insignificance inculcated through the harsh and individuality-crushing red tape made necessary by the very nature of the enterprise. The abnormal, artificial, and essentially charitable character of the alleged "work"—haphazardly created as an excuse for giving out monetary dribbles—is almost always manifest to a devitalising and spirit-dampening extent. It is so clearly a disguised "dole" that it lacks all the stimulus of that genuine work which supplies the actual needs of the community. Moreover, it is usually so repugnant in nature, and so ill-adapted to the capacities and temperaments of its performers (ditch-digging and brush-clearing for soft-handed, short-winded office clerks, and so on), that it tends all too often to become stultifying and sullenness-breeding nightmare.

The tactics of profit-seeking private employers in the crisis are about what might be expected. In the city of New York many commercial and industrial enterprises have taken advantage of the tragic labour surplus by discharging their normally paid help and hiring new staffs from the ranks of the unemployed at the same pitifully small wage—\$12.00 per week—which is offered by the local Emergency Work Bureau for the Unemployed.

One result of these palliatives and piracies is to give the much-buffed victim a disconcerting and conceivably dangerous feeling of his precarious, puppet-like position and constant instability under the existing system. Another result is the total or partial alienation of skilled workers from their normal occupations, so that they will be clumsy and rusty if ever called back to these pursuits. It is of course needless to remark on the obvious problem of the young, who are now growing into adulthood without any chance to learn and practice a regular occupation.

For the southern and western farmer the outlook is as dire as for the eastern labourer or urban clerk. Agricultural products bring no appreciable money, and foreclosed mortgages are rapidly transforming self-respecting freeholders into peasant-like and increasingly penniless tenants. Vigorous and progressive Westerners cannot look with equanimity upon a system which bids far to reduce them to the servile state of the deep South's poor-white cotton "croppers".

With large sections of the population in this hopeless and torturous state of dispossession—Yankee and Southerner, Easterner and Westerner, rustic and urbanite, Republican and Democrat, patrician and plebeian, wet and dry, old-American and assimilated immigrant for once united in a desperate common cause—it would be idle and frivolous to minimise the danger of a spread of revolutionary sentiment from the old "red" class of chronic incompetents, malcontents, fanatics, and foreigners to those responsible elements of the people who have so far been our chief bulwarks against social explosion. Of course it would not be a communistic revolution that these elements would desire, but as pointed out before, a revolution is a much easier thing to start than to control. We cannot well starve and goad

the people into an uprising, and at the same time expect to be guaranteed immunity from those extreme lengths to which uprisings are fatally apt to go. If a revolt comes, it is likely to mean bolshevism in the end—hence it behoves us to look closely at that article as now practiced in Russia and see if it be not a thing worth going to any length to escape.

In considering Soviet Russia we do not need to consult the reports of its impassioned enemies. The plainest proofs of the unfitness of its methods for nations of Western-European traditions and race-stock are to be found in the preachments of its own leaders. Certainly, many individual details of its programme—such as the coördination of industries—are of admitted ingenuity and worthy of possible adoption in modified form by the Western countries; but the merest glance at the whole underlying fabric is enough to demonstrate its unsuitability.

What the Soviets have done is to ensure a meagre livelihood to the least competent classes by destroying the whole background of tradition which made life endurable for persons of a higher degree of imagination and richer store of cultivation. It is their claim that they could not have guaranteed security to the humble without this wholesale destruction of accustomed ideas, but we may easily see that this is but a thin veil for a purely theoretical fanaticism bearing all the earmarks of a new religion—a fetichistic cult woven around the under-man's notion of transvalued social values and around a fantastically literal application and extension of the groping theories and idealistic extravagances of the late Karl Marx.

While of course the backward production-capacity of Russia creates problems unknown in America, it is none the less clear that quasi-religious zeal for a "new order" with unaccustomed values—born of the peasant leaders' hatred for the old culture which gave them a subordinate place—lies behind the wanton destruction by the Soviets of all the refinements, cherished memories, familiar customs, artistic traditions, and historic associations which gave the civilised Russian his primary reasons for existence. To claim that a production and distribution system including the humblest elements could not have been devised and eventually made effective without this cultural vandalism is the sheerest nonsense—a form of nonsense arising from the Marxians' hoary fallacy that economics and the arts are inextricably connected. The bolsheviks' real objects are not primarily to feed the starving and give decent jobs to those willing to work, but to disrupt the whole system of privilege-tenure in accordance with an elegance-hating theory of abstract justice. As between this theoretical ideal and the preservation of a real civilisation of natural growth, they choose the former. They have made it possible for everyone to live—but have deprived life of all that makes it worth living. Such is the system which communists would like to see forced upon the United States.

It is needless to rehearse the utter and degrading loss of individual liberty which results from the orthodox communistic theory that society is itself an organism in which each person is merely an insignificant cell. It is not in anti-Soviet libels, but in the proud reports of Soviet leaders, that we read of the forcible transfer of whole village populations from

their ancestral abodes to new locations in the arctic, and of the arbitrary ordering of Moscow clerks to tasks of manual labour in the farms and forests of Siberia. All these things are logical outgrowths of what the bolsheviks call their "collectivistic ideology", and typical examples of the horrors which might fall upon us if communism were to gain a foothold here.

The irreparable destruction on the purely cultural side is equally flagrant. The identification of all art (or what passes for it) with political and economic propaganda, and the virtual outlawry of the artist whose work is sincere and non-propagandist, are things too well known to need emphasis. What they have produced is a vast desert of dry and immaturely conceived social tracts, redeemed only by a few promising (and generally disapproved) experiments. This is the country which produced Turgeñev, Dostolevsky, and Tscháikovsky, and whose pre-revolutionary traditions are still a powerful influence in the western world! Of the Soviets' architectural vandalism, which destroys beauty right and left in the interest of "practical efficiency" or anti-religious fanaticism, the less said the better. Even pure science is belittled in favour of applied technology, and of the pseudo-science which can be made to serve as communistic propaganda.

While the meddling of the bolsheviks with matters of personal identity and family life is perhaps exaggerated by some, it remains a fact that the hereditary traditions of honour and human relationships which mean so much in Western-European life would be seriously imperilled wherever communism might secure a foothold. Likewise, our deepest racial instincts would be outraged by attempts to enforce negro social equality. Cherished landmarks and background details—the small things which give us a sense of placement, direction, and purpose in life—would be snatched away by the dozen. Our calendar, for example, would probably be butchered almost beyond recognition, with numbers substituted for the names of the months and days as frequently in seventeenth-century New England and among the Quakers.

The squalor and lack of privacy in living conditions imposed upon the Russian population is a portent of what would follow in communism's wake. It is, of course, clear that no nation with a fully representative population would for a moment tolerate such a chaos—Russia having succumbed only after her better elements were murdered or exiled. That such murder and exile would be the lot of the best American elements in case of a communistic revolt is virtually self-evident—and it might be added that the exiles would probably find much difficulty in gaining a permanent haven elsewhere, since all the European and colonial nations are too racked with unemployment problems of their own to welcome any large body of newcomers, no matter how high in quality. Probably Canada—climactically unsuited for a large number of us—would form the principal refuge, unless parts of the United States (such as the loyal, conservative, and overwhelmingly native-American South) remained free from bolshevik control.

If it be fancied that a realisation of these perils will be enough to deter the desperate and dispossessed American unemployed from any rash move, we must remember that on the other hand provocations are rapidly and un-

bearably increasing. Each year the situation grows worse, and relief money comes harder and harder. When all charities and appropriations trickle down to nothingness, and actual starving looms close at hand, how likely are the victims to employ the finer gradations of reason? Clearly, a change must come somehow—and the earnest wish of the good citizen is that it may come through the intelligent action of properly seated legislators and lead to something like a remedy, rather than through a general tumult and chaos leading in all probability to destruction. The cultural fruits of 1500 years of continuous Anglo-Saxon life, 300 of them amidst the moulding influences of this continent, are too precious to be risked in the arena of savage strife.

What, then, is to be done? Certainly no one is naive enough to fancy that a casual edict or two from congress, even in the most approved direction, will be sufficient to produce an overbrimming Utopia on twenty-four hours' notice! At the moment it is unlikely that anyone could outline the long series of gradual steps and legislative experiments which will be needed to bring our political institutions into accord with changed realities, facilitate the wider distribution of resources, and restore to the willing workman the certainty of receiving a good living in exchange for his labour. All we can expect at first is that the legislators will slowly begin—through popular clamour and repetitions of the obvious—to shed the almost insane cowl of blindness, indifference, evasion, and self-deception which the mixed forces of inertia, reckless plutocratic pressure, and obsolete, preconceived doctrines have drawn so tightly over their eyes. A genuine readiness to abandon the worship of methods, abstract formulae, and catchwords, to think in terms of the entire population rather than of the larger business interests, and to face the realities of the present industrial muddle with an open willingness to use unorthodox methods in achieving specific ends, is the most one may ask of the government at present, except perhaps a few immediate and temporary palliatives such as domestic debt cancellation and an increase in public relief through the heavy taxation of very large accumulations of private capital.

It would be absurd for a layman, ignorant of the complex links of cause and effect involved in the regulation of production and distribution, and in the readjustment of resources, to do more than guess vaguely at any of the elements of possible recovery. Probably a bald assertion of governmental control over large accumulations of resources—a potential limitation of private property beyond certain liberal limits—would form one of the salient features. This would involve the state coördination and operation of the wider fundamental industries on a basis of service rather than profit, and would enable the hours and conditions of labour to be artificially regulated with a view to distributing work among the whole population, no matter how little is left by machinery to be done, or how little profit could be obtained from the employment of many persons at a really living wage for only a few hours per week.

It will probably be thought advisable to guarantee decently appropriate work to every citizen of the state, with a really substantial unemployment

insurance to allow for the natural imperfections in this universal allotment. Reciprocally, however, the state will probably reserve the right to make work compulsory upon everyone when circumstances demand it—though refraining from forcing persons into remote and inappropriate industries as the Soviets do. Liberal old-age pensions, beginning early enough to help in cutting down the permanent labour surplus, are virtually a foregone conclusion.

Whether independent agriculture can be preserved, no one can properly predict. If this, and independent merchandising, survive, certain complex price-fixing and other auxiliary measures will probably be necessary. Otherwise the growth of governmentally controlled farms and chain selling establishments seems likely, the operators of these things receiving the customary guarantees of employed persons. There would seem to be no barrier against such an universal condition of working for the government; nor would such an arrangement, in a country of unlimited resources and production, necessitate any of the restrictions on the individual which the Soviets ruthlessly impose.

Levels of salary in every branch of activity would be determined by the complexity and difficulty of the work performed, so that high-grade executives would receive as much more than common labourers as is now the custom. The continued protection of limited private property would of course enable persons of the executive class to retain their present type of existence—minus some of the extravagances—and to retire on a modest scale without calling on the pension funds except in case of necessity.

The state control of industry would naturally introduce new factors into the matter of foreign commerce, and one cannot well predict the future of tariff and free trade. Large investments in foreign countries—and especially the wholesale exploitation of economically backward countries—would almost certainly be discouraged as a leading provocative in war-breeding. For defensive purposes, of course, an army and navy of great strength would be rigorously maintained—perhaps through universal training.

On the cultural side the existing tradition need not be menaced. Education, however, will require amplification in order to meet the needs of a radically increased leisure among all classes of society. It is probable that the number of persons possessing a sound general culture will be greatly increased, with correspondingly good results to the civilisation. On the other hand, it would be foolish to assume that the more mentally sluggish types will ever lose their present cultural inferiority. Curricula will naturally be shaped to fit existing conditions; and in view of the now complex nature of government and industry, civics and economics will receive enhanced attention.

If anything approaching the Soviets' re-shaping of popular conceptions is attempted, it will probably be in the direction of removing the old tendency to judge the individual by his industrial status—a step made necessary by the extension of much potentially cultivated leisure to persons of varying occupation. Naturally this leisure, plus education, will bring many of the skilled labouring class into fields of intellectual and aesthetic ac-

tivity, removing them altogether from the traditional cultural state of the "workman"; and this removal must be recognised.

Where the course of good sense will have to differ most widely from the plans of old-time idealistic socialism is in the matter of political organisation. Nowadays we realise that no layman, no matter how generally cultivated, is in any way capable of passing on any average point of governmental policy. National affairs, in an age of intensive mechanisation and widespread organisation, have become so involved and technical that only an administrative and economic expert or a trained engineer can form any genuinely clear idea of how certain broadly desirable results can be secured, or what the ultimate consequences of any proposed measure will really be. All the factors of cause and effect in political action, and in the problems of production, distribution, and national maintenance, have become so infinitely complex that the ordinary individual can no longer hope to trace them. Today the "man in the street" casts his vote for things he actually knows nothing about, and nothing but the subterranean control of large industrial interests (now a menace because of our changing economy) have so far saved the nation from general incompetence and irresponsible chaos in government.

Obviously government by the people is now a joke or a tragedy, although government for them remains as the most logical goal. Though the wider distribution of resources must be accepted as a cardinal policy, the narrower restriction of power will be a necessary corollary. No bungling democratic government could even begin to accomplish the delicate adjustments which loom ahead. Laymen of slight education and low intelligence are wholly useless and potentially harmful as determiners of the national course, and even laymen of wide education and high intelligence can do no more than roughly (and often erroneously) judge the general executive calibre of certain administrators from watching their performances in a few fields which may happen to be familiar. No non-technician, be he artist, philosopher, or scientist, can even begin to judge the labyrinthine governmental problems with which these administrators must deal.

Accordingly we must expect any adequate government to be of the sort now generally called "fascistic"—forming, as it were, an oligarchy of intelligence and education. Office-holding must be limited to men of high technical training, and the franchise which elects them must be granted only to those able to pass rigorous educational examinations (emphasising civic and economic subjects) and scientific intelligence tests. Elective offices ought to be very few—perhaps no more than a single dictator—in order to ensure harmony and speed in the execution of necessary measures. What would make such a system perfectly fair and representative would be, of course, the equal availability of franchise-earning education to all—an effective reality in view of the leisure of the future. Corruption, naturally, could not be entirely abolished; but there would undoubtedly be far less of it in a government of the educated and the intelligent than in the haphazard governments of today.

The difficulties in getting such a government established, like those in getting any useful measure enacted, need be underestimated by none.

Therein lies the tenuous uncertainty of all predictions. However, it is noteworthy that in times of national peril the bulk of the people—holding the balance of physical power—are often willing to support policies which, although beyond their understanding and tending to curtail their power, seem to them honestly designed for their benefit. Thus, despite minority grumbings, Mussolini was borne to office by the genuine will of the Italian people.

Such are the prophetic guesses of a layman—self-disqualified, as just noted, from any pretence to authoritativeness. It must be understood that the real developments of the future are utterly beyond prediction, since wholly unseen on wrongly appraised factors may swing matters in totally unexpected directions. Even without these factors many conceivable alternative courses, some not vastly removed from ordinary capitalism, exist; the preceding guesses including perhaps the extremes of departure from present conditions which could reasonably be called for, according to our present idea of the possibilities. All that seems certain is that the general problem must very soon be squarely and scientifically faced by the government without regard for political and economic orthodoxies, if the peril of an unfathomed revolutionary abyss is to be averted.

Hence these repetitions of things which thousands have been thinking, saying, writing, and publishing in the last few years. They are things which must be repeated more and more widely—publicised as "technocracy" was publicised—if the slow and dim-eyed forces at the helm are to be impressed in time to take preservative action. We must cease to fear being trite.

Here are the facts:

Millions are unemployed, probably permanently under the present system, and existing in increasing misery and fear.

It is no longer possible for ability and willingness to work to guarantee a man a decent living, and the widespread conviction of this is undermining public morale.

There are plenty of resources in the country, withheld by artificial methods from those who need them.

Attempts at relief have so far been irregular, inadequate, unscientific, and painful to the recipients; producing a dangerous popular psychology.

When men feel that an existing system has nothing to give them, they will strike out for another system. Insecurity for half the nation means disaster for the whole.

If the people are starved into revolution, the worst excesses of communism are very likely to occur.

Precedent makes it certain that, given the will, brains, independence, and determination of high-grade men, the forces of government can accomplish a recuperative redistribution of resources through emergency measures ignoring the absolute orthodoxies of politics and economics.

What is needed is a restoration of the power of normal work to ensure each individual a self-respecting status and a modest quota of food, clothing, shelter, freedom, and recreation; enough rewards, that is, to make life under the existing civilisation worth enduring.

These matters cannot be dodged, and every moment of delay in facing them increases the nation's peril. We have plenty of thoughtful and liberal men who cannot or do not act, and plenty of strong men of action who cannot or will not think in a far-sighted or liberal way. Are there not a few in the seats of power who have both the minds to think and the strength and opportunity to act?

Feb. 22, 1933

[Lovecraft's outline for the essay on the verso of p. 1 of the ms.:]

I. General Outline

- (a) Repetition needed in a crisis
- (b) Nature of what the government must understand
- (c) Artificial orthodoxies can be dispensed with
- (d) Primary problem—permanent technological unemployment
- (e) Danger of Revolution

II. Detailed Considerations

- (a) Plight of the unemployed
- (b) Ineffective attempts at relief
- (c) Menacing trend of popular psychology
- (d) Alternative of communism examined
- (e) Nature of a remedial attitude
- (f) Conjectures as to effective future policies
 - (1) Industrial
 - (2) Agricultural
 - (3) Financial
 - (4) Foreign
 - (5) Cultural
 - (6) Political
- (g) Summary & conclusion

An Uncompromising Look at the Cthulhu Mythos

by Will Murray



ontroversy has always swirled around the Cthulhu Mythos.

For almost as long as there has been a Mythos, the imaginary body of fiction we like to call the Cthulhu Mythos has been as much a focal point of heated dialogue as it has been a breeding pool for new writers of horror stories with a cosmic bent. Most of the speculation and argument anent the Mythos has stalled out on the Eternal Question: "What Belongs and What Don't?" Sometimes the question is put even less elegantly.

Once upon a time, the chief arbiter of the Eternal Question was H. P. Lovecraft's correspondent, acolyte, posthumous publisher, champion and, regrettably as well, literary idiot offspring. I refer, of course, to August Derleth.

It was Derleth, more than anyone during those bleak years after Lovecraft's desolating demise, who kept the torch of the Mythos aloft. It was Derleth who, his laudable Arkham House efforts aside, attempted to systematize and standardize the Cthulhu Mythos—a thing Lovecraft himself never did. That Derleth's torch shed more darkness than light is only now widely appreciated, nearly fifteen years after his own demise. It was Derleth who helped popularize—if not actually coin—the all-encompassing term Cthulhu Mythos. It was Derleth who, especially during the early Arkham House years, held sway over his mentor's concepts as capriciously as even the blind idiot-Sultan Azathoth himself.

Derleth co-opted the Mythos, placed his doubtful imprimatur over others' efforts to contribute to it, and several times went so far as to prevent the Cthulvian efforts of persons not having his tacit permission from enjoying publication. The most famous example of this, perhaps, are the *Weird Tales* stories of C. Hall Thompson, which appeared in the Forties. These were Mythos tales as excellent of mood and execution as any others, marred only by their curious New Jersey (the towns of Inneswich and Kalesmouth on the Jersey branch of the Miskatonic!) locales. Nevertheless, Derleth intervened and prevented the publication of any further C. Hall Thompson Mythos stories after the first two had appeared in print.

Even the seemingly all-encompassing term, The Cthulhu Mythos, has recently come under attack. Alternate offerings have included the comprehensive-sounding Lovecraft Mythos and the cumbersome Yog-Sothoth Cycle of Myth. Thus far, no one has attempted to revive Derleth's questionable original term, The Mythology of Hastur, which he had offered to Lovecraft some time before the latter's death.

It would seem that we are currently in a revisionist phase of Love-

craftian scholarship. The "What Belongs and What Don't?" question continues to rage. A third, newly updated edition of Weinberg and Berglund's *Reader's Guide to the Cthulhu Mythos* is rumored to be forthcoming. Considering that the last edition managed to include not only every Mythos story—including comic book references—that could possibly be allowed under the least stringent rules imaginable, but also numerous stories-in-progress, intended for publication, planned or imagined, it is not likely to shed much light on the Eternal Question.

It is, to be sure, a clouded issue. August Derleth's own imperfect understanding of Lovecraft's mechanistic fictional universe argues that in a streamlining toward a purer Mythos, his stuff should be the first to go.

But even stories by H. P. Lovecraft himself are not immune from questions of theological appropriateness. Most critics consider Lovecraft's seminal story, "The Festival", to be the first Mythos story. Yet a careful reading of that tale will yield no Cthulhuvian entities or cosmic ideas. Just a passing reference to the *Necronomicon*, which figures prominently in later Mythos stories—and later non-Mythos stories.

The fact is that the first story Lovecraft wrote which, when it reached print, made readers of *Weird Tales* sit up, take notice, and sense that here was something different and new and original, was "The Call of Cthulhu". It's all there in "Call": the cosmic lore, brooding preterhuman entities, inextricable blending of ancient history and forward-thinking science fictional concepts, the cults, everything.

"The Call of Cthulhu" was the primal Cthulhu Mythos story. It was in that short novella that concepts which had long been percolating in Lovecraft's mind first coalesced and took gigantic shape. It's possible that even Lovecraft himself didn't realize that he was making a quantum leap forward in the field of horror fiction in that one lean story.

The next story Lovecraft published was "The Colour out of Space". Many discount this as a Mythos story, despite its inescapably cosmic theme. Perhaps if the sentient gaseous being from the fallen Arkham meteor had been given a Cthulhuvian name—say Phart—and had Lovecraft repeated that name in a later story, then there would have been no question in any minds but that "Colour" was a venture into the Mythos. But as it happened, Lovecraft was dealing with an unnamed, unspeaking entity, without any of the supporting *Necronomiconesque* elements. So it's easy to dismiss.

But as I pointed out in my article, "Sources for 'The Colour out of Space'" (*Crypt of Cthulhu* #28, Yuletide 1984), there was a similar gaseous intelligence, S'gnac, in two earlier Lovecraft stories, "Celephaïs" and *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*. This could easily, even probably, be the same entity—or a related one—thus bringing "Colour" at least tentatively into the Mythos for those who feel thematic evidence must be something one can spell, and not something one feels.

It was not long before Lovecraft expanded upon his new direction in "The Dunwich Horror". This story was not even remotely a sequel to "The Call of Cthulhu"—or even "Colour". Rather it was a thematic continuation involving different characters, related concepts and a further exploration

of Lovecraft's universe-in-the-making. Like "The Call of Cthulhu", it is considered one of Lovecraft's unqualified masterpieces.

Two years passed between the writing of "Call" and the completion of "Dunwich". In that interim, Lovecraft worked on various revisions, short pieces and, perhaps emboldened by the success of "The Call of Cthulhu", two ambitious novels, *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* and *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. Neither saw print during Lovecraft's lifetime. Yet both have been retroactively subsumed into the Cthulhu Mythos by certain scholars, simply because concepts that later appeared in the Mythos were first toyed with in those two efforts. Yog-Sothoth, for example, was first written about in *Ward*, but the concept does not appear to have been fully realized here, as it would later be in "The Dunwich Horror", prompting some scholars to dismiss *Ward* from the Mythos entirely.

With the completion of "The Dunwich Horror", the burgeoning Cthulhu Mythos was at a critical juncture. Regardless of how well Lovecraft may have thought out these particular stories, he was still feeling his way forward. Other stories, ideas, plans and dreams bubbled and simmered, waiting their rightful time.

Then, a curious thing began happening.

Other writers began borrowing Lovecraft's ideas for their own stories.

It was, at first blush, an altogether innocent and friendly phenomenon. Frank Belknap Long started it. In his story, "The Space-Eaters" (*Weird Tales*, July 1928), in which he happened playfully to include Lovecraft as a character, Long also deigned to mention the dreaded *Necronomicon*. It was an in-joke more than anything else, and in itself harmless. The *Necronomicon* was at that point not exclusively a Mythos concept—just a Lovecraftian one.

But then Clark Ashton Smith got into the act with his story, "The Tale of Satampra Zeiros", in which he introduced the toad-god Tsathoggua. And Robert E. Howard turned his hand to some Lovecraftian concepts, too. In their own respective fictional worlds, they started name-dropping like crazy.

Lovecraft professed flattery and enthusiasm over their efforts, especially for Clark Ashton Smith's work because Lovecraft had tended to consider Smith something more than a peer—he was a legitimate poet of acclaim. Long and Howard were merely fellow *Weird Tales* contributors and warm pen pals. But what could Lovecraft do? If this sudden adoption of his infant ideas by others disturbed him in any way, he gave no written sign. But what could he have done, if it did? They were his friends and he was a gentleman. He had several times before turned a blind eye to borrowings and quasi-plagiarisms of his work by strangers. Besides, Lovecraft had a distressing habit of revising and touching up, unasked, the works of his friends when carbons of their stories turned up in his mail.

It was during this period that he first began to play along with the game. Three consecutive revisions—"The Electric Executioner", "The Mound", and "Medusa's Coil"—include references to Lovecraftian elements as Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, the *Necronomicon*, and even Smith's Tsathoggua. Lovecraft presumably didn't take his revisions as seriously as his original fiction. But

his correspondents—most of them aware of the true author behind these tales—seemed not to have made such a distinction, for this only encouraged them further.

Between 1928, when "The Dunwich Horror" was finished, and the writing of his fourth so-called Cthulhu Mythos story, "The Whisperer in Darkness", something major had gone awry.

H. P. Lovecraft had lost what is perhaps a writer's most precious right—that of primacy over his own material.

He took it in good humor, of course. But in "The Whisperer in Darkness", Lovecraft first starts to borrow back, citing Long's Hounds of Tindalos in the same paragraph as other Mythos concepts, as well as stuff out of Lovecraft's revisions of the work of others. Yig, from Zealia Bishop's "The Curse of Yig", is mentioned, as is Kathulos, from Robert E. Howard's *Skull-Face*. The in-jokiness goes to an extreme with the deadpan reference to "The Commorium myth-cycle of the Atlantean high-priest, Klarkash-Ton"—a reference to Clark Ashton Smith's Tsathoggua stories from *Weird Tales*.

In "The Whisperer in Darkness" Lovecraft first incorporated the inventions of contemporary writers into one of his non-revisory stories. And thus the barriers between his serious fiction and his revisions fell crashing forever. From this point on, Lovecraft, Long, Smith, Howard, Robert Bloch and others all borrow freely from one another's stories. And the underlying rationale for the Cthulhu Mythos, still in a nascent stage, becomes diluted and distorted—if not entirely ignored amid the fun and games.

In a letter to William Frederick Anger, dated August 14, 1934, Lovecraft explained the end result of these activities:

For the fun of building up a convincing cycle of synthetic folklore, all of our gang frequently allude to the pet demons of the others—thus Smith uses my Yog-Sothoth, while I use his Tsathoggua. Also, I sometimes insert a devil or two of my own in tales I revise or ghost-write for professional clients. Thus our black pantheon acquires an extensive publicity & pseudo-authoritativeness it would not otherwise get.

Virtually no Mythos story penned by H. P. Lovecraft from "The Whisperer in Darkness" onward is free of cross-borrowings. While it is true that the in-jokes were most often lost on *Weird Tales* readers of the day and did not harm the mood of the stories—and the casual hints of interconnectedness among the themes and icons of different *Weird Tales* writers no doubt added something to the reader's thrill in those early days—to latter-day readers steeped in Lovecraft's *Selected Letters* and numerous scholarly articles, these asides are distracting even when they are amusing. And considering Lovecraft's oft-professed belief that in horror fiction mood was all, this should have been anathema to him.

In a very real sense, the Mythos as we know it—in the sense of a body of work written by many authors, sharing the same rough milieu, but lacking

a coherent focus—began with "The Whisperer in Darkness". The story, like all which followed it, was an indiscriminate lodestone for purloined names and half-understood ideas. Lovecraft was as guilty as anyone else of the latter. When he mentioned Machen's Doels or things Voorish, he had no more idea than anyone else what those terms might refer to.

This phenomenon, trend, or whatever one wishes to call it, reached the heights of its fun and at the same time the depths of its intellectual bankruptcy with the trilogy of Lovecraft and Robert Bloch stories which began with Bloch's "The Shambler from the Stars", continued with what was unfortunately Lovecraft's last new Mythos story, "The Haunter of the Dark", and ended with Bloch's "The Shadow from the Steeple"—all in all, nothing more than an extended joke.

To put it in harsh terms, other writers ran off with Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos before he could bring it to full realization. Rather than be left in the dust of his more prolific fellow scribes, Lovecraft attempted to keep pace with them.

As a result, Lovecraftian elder gods battled heroic barbarians in Robert E. Howard Conan stories—whose very formalistic basis was the antithesis of Lovecraft's anti-heroic concepts. Writers as diverse as Henry Kuttner, Hugh B. Cave, Henry Hasse and legions of others got so busy emulating and competing with Lovecraft that, upon his death in 1937, the flood of Cthulhu Mythos stories continued for years unabated.

Perhaps the most egregious, as well as the most interesting, was A. Merritt's 1932 novel, *The Dwellers in the Mirage*. The octopus demon Khalk'ru of the story is a literal steal of Cthulhu. Incredibly, Merritt was a major fantasy author—but not a member of the Lovecraft circle. He simply grabbed the concept and ran with it. Lovecraft never even complained.

With August Derleth's entry into the lists, and his subsequent "collaborations", the body of H. P. Lovecraft's legitimate work—never mind that portion posthumously termed the Cthulhu Mythos—became a sorry choked mess indeed.

It will take years of scholarly excavation to restore the Mythos—and the Lovecraft corpus—to some semblance of its true nature and perspective. In truth, it is the scholars and critics themselves who are in part to blame for what has become The Mythos As We Know It.

In their zeal to analyze, understand and compartmentalize, scholars have steadily increased the number of stories which qualify as belonging to the Mythos. If Lovecraft mentioned an entity or element in a Mythos story and that item was later or earlier mentioned in what is otherwise a non-Mythos story, that tale was automatically yanked into the Mythos. Anthologizers are likewise guilty. One Mythos anthology went so far as to include stories by Robert W. Chambers and Ambrose Bierce—which had been written when Lovecraft was still in short pants!—simply because certain arcane names mentioned in those stories had also been mentioned in passing in Lovecraft stories. The fact was, Lovecraft was something of a literary name-dropper. All his stories, almost without exception, reverberate and re-

flect elements from his other fiction. Virtually all of Lovecraft is interconnected by ideas and elements. But they don't have the same meaning to us—who today insist that such an artificial concept as the Cthulhu Mythos has any absolute meaning or validity—as they did to Lovecraft, who simply wrote his stories, and borrowed from wherever whim dictated—even if it was from himself!

In the interests of moving toward a more coherent, rational view of the Cthulhu Mythos, I propose that a list of H. P. Lovecraft stories which fit firmly and unqualifiedly into the Mythos run as follows:

"The Call of Cthulhu"

"The Colour out of Space"

"The Dunwich Horror"

Period.

Nothing written before "Call" contains any of the thematic ideas first expressed in that seminal story. And nothing Lovecraft penned after "The Dunwich Horror" was free from external influence, tampering, borrowings and reciprocal playfulness. The Cthulhu Mythos may have been going in an explicit direction before others leaped upon it. We'll never know. But there is no question that had others not gotten into the act and influenced Lovecraft in certain less sober directions, the Mythos would not have veered down some of the wayward paths where it ultimately did wander.

There might not have been the cosmological discrepancies evident in a comparison between *At the Mountains of Madness* and "The Shadow out of Time", for instance. There might not have been the confusion between the Old Ones, Great Old Ones and others. And August Derleth may never have gotten a clumsy toehold in something in which he had no business even correcting the spelling.

It's time the pendulum swung back. The Cthulhu Mythos has been too much diluted. Lovecraft must take some of the credit for that, for he did not put his foot down (assuming he had that inclination) when the opportunity arose. But we, the scholars and critics of his work, must do so. We've accepted too many stories into our semi-arbitrary category, The Cthulhu Mythos—confused, perhaps, by the innate connectedness of most of Lovecraft's fiction. For the pendulum to swing into a more reasonable alignment, it must start at the opposite end of its track.

And that is a strict interpretation of the Mythos, the true Mythos, the undiluted Mythos, intact and untampered with. The Mythos as it exists in only three Lovecraft stories—the three rightfully considered his greatest: "The Call of Cthulhu", "The Colour out of Space", and "The Dunwich Horror".

Disbelievers Ever

(Dedicated to the late H. P. Lovecraft)

by R. W. Sherman

[Reprinted from Amateur Correspondent, 2, No. 2 (Sept.-Oct. 1937), 11.—Ed.]

How ironic is the attitude of humans towards genius of any kind! Subjected to the ridicule and whims of narrow-minded people, the great inevitably go to their death long before the time appointed. Whether directly or indirectly, public sentiment will always play an important part in the life of any man—especially in the lives of those who openly and without recourse to hypocrisy present their unorthodox themes to skeptical eyes.

Such a man was the late H. P. Lovecraft. Throughout the course of his entire literary career he found himself wedged between two factions—a group of enthusiastic followers who worshipped his very name, and a clique of vehement scoffers who seemed to achieve delight in the berating of this master. Which one was the more irritating remains a moot question. His admirers, spurred on by his kindly, intelligent aid in their own endeavors, succeeded only in unearthing further troubles to place upon his already bowed shoulders; while his critics reeled blast upon blast of biting criticism of his works across the editorial desk.

Always strife. Always trouble and hardship. And suddenly, with serpentine swiftness, death intervenes.

For a while there is a stunned silence, a cessation of activities. Lovecraft's followers are stricken by the appalling suddenness of the disaster; in the minds of his critics there is great mental conflict regarding the advisability of continuing on their past course. Unwillingly, forced by their consternation, they once again peruse the works they had so bitterly condemned. And, fighting through wave after wave of weakening resistance, the seed of the genius of the man takes root in their minds. They read further with greater concentration, and the seed begins to sprout. In a flash, the implanted idea has grown to maturity, and they are overcome by many bewildering emotions.

They arise, shaken in soul. In a moment their course, as they see it, is set. In a vain endeavor to cover up their blind criticism, they glibly sing his praises and raise fantastic monuments to his greatness. Too late they have seen the light; and the thought most appropriate for their be-

havior lies in the last lines of Felix Kowalewski's poem, *Death of the Artist*:

"O Muse of Art, what bitter irony!
Alive they hound, but dead they worship me!
'Tis my poor name floats up in cadenced song!"

BRIEFLY NOTED

Peter Cannon, scholar of both Lovecraft and Sherlock Holmes, has published his final words on the relations between the two men in "The Return of Sherlock Holmes and H. P. Lovecraft", in *The Baker Street Journal*, 34, No. 4 (December 1984). Elaborating upon such of his articles as "Parallel Passages in 'The Adventure of the Copper Beeches' and 'The Picture in the House'" (*Lovecraft Studies*, Fall 1979), Cannon studies not only Lovecraft's tales but his poetry and passages from his letters in assessing the influence of the fictional detective upon Lovecraft's work. Order from Fordham University Press, University Box L, Bronx, NY 10458 (\$4.50 per issue).

The Italian artist Alessandro Bani has produced a magnificent portfolio of fantasy art under the title *Moonwind*, with an appreciation by Mariangela Cerrino. The twenty plates included display Bani's mastery of several different styles of fantastic art, from sophisticated sword-and-sorcery to ethereal Dunsanian otherworldliness. The portfolio is issued by the Club H. G. Wells in Modena.

Mark Valentine and Roger Dobson have issued a handsome booklet, *Arthur Machen: Apostle of Wonder* (Oxford & Northampton: Caermaen Books, 1985), containing memoirs old and new of Machen (by M. P. Shiel, E. H. Viziak, Anthony Lejeune, and others), plus several critical articles of note; the editors each contribute a sensitive essay on Machen's work and thought. Also included is Frank Belknap Long's celebrated sonnet "On Reading Arthur Machen". This volume will be reviewed more extensively in the first issue of *Studies in Weird Fiction*.

Reviews

H. P. LOVECRAFT. *At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels*. Selected by August Derleth, with texts edited by S. T. Joshi and an introduction by James Turner. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, [1985]. xvii, 458 pp. \$16.95 hc. Reviewed by David E. Schultz.

In recent years, scholars have been returning to the original texts of such writers as Stephen Crane, William Faulkner and Mark Twain to publish "authorial intention" or works before editing to aid in the study and appreciation of those works as the authors meant them to be read. For example, a new edition of *Ulysses*, based on James Joyce's manuscripts, corrects nearly 5000 omissions, transpositions and other errors found throughout the work—nearly seven errors per printed page. Joyce scholars consider the book a landmark, and Hugh Kenner, professor of English literature at Johns Hopkins University, has said: "To me, it amounts to a new book because so many things are sharpened and firmed up." Joyce's biographer, Richard Ellmann, says that "some of the corrections are substantive, and at least one is of such importance that it will have a considerable effect upon the interpretation of the whole book." That correction consists merely of the restoration of five lines of dialogue early in the novel.

The recent publication of "authorial intention" editions of the works of H. P. Lovecraft is no less a landmark event—at least to Lovecraft scholars—but the general reception of the corrected edition of *The Dunwich Horror* has been rather cool. The opinion seems to be that restoration of Lovecraft's stories to their original condition was not particularly important; that the changing of spellings or punctuation to conform to his preference was not significant presumably because the majority of the corrections were not earthshaking and Lovecraft is a minor writer, not worthy of the effort. It is difficult to understand such casual dismissal of such an important advance in Lovecraft scholarship. Of William Faulkner's *Novels 1930-1935*, The Library of America states that the changes in *As I Lay Dying*, *Sans-tuary*, *Light in August* and most especially *Pylon* "are subtle and have a startling, cumulative effect and definitely alter one's reading of the works." The same can easily be said of the restoration of Lovecraft's fiction, for we are well aware that he painstakingly strived to achieve a desired cumulative effect in his stories. Such restoration should not be taken lightly, and perhaps the scoffers will be more impressed with the new edition of *At the Mountains of Madness*.

The volume, a new edition of Arkham House's 1964 title (regardless of what the copyright calls the book), shows more dramatically than its predecessor the severity of corruption of Lovecraft's works. It is particularly significant because the three novels it contains have never seen

publication in any condition that Lovecraft would have approved. The restoration of *At the Mountains of Madness*, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* and *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* probably constitutes the single most significant advance in Lovecraft scholarship. These three novels read virtually as new works. One can only wonder how incomprehensibly the contents of this book read in the many foreign translations based on the original faulty texts.

The title story was insensitively edited when it appeared in *Astounding Stories* in 1936. As Joshi has pointed out (see *Lovecraft Studies* #6, Spring 1982), Arkham House did not well succeed in publishing the novel the way Lovecraft wrote it because they did not consult all the surviving manuscripts. The other two novels were never published in Lovecraft's lifetime. Thus, copyists unfamiliar with Lovecraft's handwriting and the chaotic organization of Lovecraft's drafts were given the task of deciphering the manuscripts. They introduced hundreds of errors that have stood since the first publication of the novels in the 1940s.

The reader is reminded that the restoration of an author's writings is not always a matter of consulting surviving manuscripts and simply transcribing them for the typesetter. In the case of *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* and *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, Joshi had to decipher first-draft holograph manuscripts. As such, some editorial decisions had to be made about correcting inconsistencies that Lovecraft was never able to correct himself. For instance, the letter from Ward to Dr. Willett found on p. 171 of *Charles Dexter Ward* in the 1964 edition is dated March 8, 1928, as Lovecraft wrote it in his manuscript. Clearly, the letter must be dated February for sense and so Joshi has corrected Lovecraft's lapse (p. 181), which Lovecraft undoubtedly would have done had he ever prepared the novel for publication. For the novel *At the Mountains of Madness* Joshi had to consult Lovecraft's original manuscript, a typescript, and Lovecraft's copy of *Astounding* in which Lovecraft corrected only partially the myriad errors made by the first publisher. The final product—which Lovecraft himself never saw—can be safely said to be the novel in which Lovecraft took deep pride and which he considered his greatest achievement, for it now reads like the great achievement that it is. Indeed, all the stories in *At the Mountains of Madness* are much more enjoyable to read in corrected form, for they are not marred by the infinite lapses that made Lovecraft seem to have no ear for style.

In *At the Mountains of Madness* we find Arkham House's decision not to reorganize Lovecraft's stories in a more meaningful way to be even more irritating than it was in *The Dunwich Horror*. The new volume is subtitled "and other novels", but only three of the eight tales could be considered to be novels on the basis of length, and very short novels at that. "The Shunned House" is shorter than other Lovecraft stories which might have better been included in a book so titled, such as "The Whisperer in Darkness", "The Shadow over Innsmouth" or "The Shadow out of Time". The inclusion of "The Statement of Randolph Carter", a scant six pages long, might seem foolish, but August Derleth felt it wise to include the Randolph Carter

stories in one volume; thus we also find "The Silver Key" and "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" along with *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* and "The Statement of Randolph Carter". However, by such reasoning, both "The Unnamable" and "Pickman's Model" should also have been included, for Carter is the narrator of the former story and Richard Pickman figures as prominently in the latter story as he does in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*. Such haphazard organization makes the case for chronological collection of Lovecraft's work much stronger, but there is no reason to expect to see chronologically edited volumes before the appearance of Lovecraft's Collected Works.

The introduction by Arkham House's editor, James Turner, is something of a mystery to this reviewer. Whereas August Derleth's original (though error-filled) introduction at least addressed the contents of the book (as any introduction should), Turner's seems intentionally to avoid any mention of the contents. However, his comments about the Old Ones and Lovecraft's gradual emergence into the twentieth century are insightful and worth reading.

Lovecraft said the "rarest of literary marvels" was a book absolutely free of typographical errors. Alas, *At the Mountains of Madness* is a flawed gem, for it has at least one typo. The cowering "frightened mountain wall" on p. 36 should instead be a towering "frightful mountain wall". (And as long as you are noting corrections, delete the "u" from "ould" on p. 97 of *The Dunwich Horror*.) The new Lovecraft editions may not be perfect, but the eradication of several thousands of typographical and editorial errors is no small achievement. With the publication of *Dagon*, Lovecraft scholars will have a firm foundation on which to base future study of Lovecraft's writings.

S. T. JOSHI and L. D. BLACKMORE, comps. *H. P. Lovecraft and Lovecraft Criticism: An Annotated Bibliography: Supplement 1980-1984*. West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1985. iv, 72 pp. \$6.95 pb. Reviewed by Dabney Hoskins.

Since the publication of S. T. Joshi's monumental Lovecraft bibliography in 1981, an astonishing amount of material has appeared both here and abroad. Leading the list of landmark works is the textually corrected "sixth printing" of the Arkham House edition of *The Dunwich Horror* (1984), surely the most important volume of Lovecraft fiction since *The Outsider*. Other notable new works covered in this supplement include numerous foreign translations (Japanese, German, Spanish, Italian) and the first two book-length treatments of his oeuvre as a whole, Donald R. Burleson's *H. P. Lovecraft: A Critical Study* and S. T. Joshi's *Starmont Reader's Guide No. 13*. While the bulk of the criticism, especially in this country, is confined to

Crypt of Cthulhu (more than a third of the world total; editor Robert M. Price, with 43 articles in the "Criticism in Books or Periodicals" category to his credit, represents a one-man industry), *Lovecraft Studies*, and other more general journals devoted to the fantasy genre, one is heartened to see that Lovecraft has achieved some mainstream recognition in the form of a review of *Four Decades of Criticism* in the *Times Literary Supplement* and an essay in *Modern Fiction Studies* on the parallels between him and Thomas Pynchon.

That this supplement was issued by Necronomicon Press rather than by a university press underscores the fact that Lovecraft remains primarily the province of a small coterie of admirers. This booklet is likely to reach many more fans than university libraries; to be reviewed here and in *Crypt of Cthulhu* but not in any of the standard literary journals. However restricted the audience, compilers S. T. Joshi and L. D. Blackmore have done a first-class job in recording the Lovecraft scholarship produced in the first half of this decade. One looks forward to their having an even richer trove to document in the next four or five years as we approach the 1990 centennial.

A final note: Peter Cannon's article "Did Lovecraft Read *Middlemarch*?" should not have been listed. Like his "HPL and JFK" it is a piece of humor, which has no place in a serious bibliography.

BRIEFLY NOTED

From England comes the *Antiquarian Book Monthly Review*, ordinarily a general magazine of antiquarian book news but whose December 1985 issue is unusually rich in material of interest to the fantasiste. The lead article is "William Hope Hodgson: Voyager and Visionary", a biographical-critical article by Ian Bell, Hodgson's most ardent recent champion. Also included is Roger Dobson's entertaining "The Book That Never Was", giving an account of the mythical *Necronomicon* and of the various attempts over the years to convince unwary readers that the book actually existed. Elsewhere in the issue Dobson briefly reviews the new Arkham House edition of Lovecraft's fiction edited by S. T. Joshi.

Letters

I wanted to raise a point concerning your article on Lovecraftian scholarship ["The Development of Lovecraftian Studies" by S. T. Joshi; *Lovecraft Studies* 4, No. 2 (Fall 1985)]. I would admit that my *Dream Quest of H. P. Lovecraft* is rather shoddy work, and of no value to anyone except a rank beginner in Lovecraft studies (who would then graduate to more sophisticated works, but, from me, would have learned a little bit, gotten some idea of the extent of the Old Gent's work, and might have been cured of some notions—all of which I have encountered in circulation among alleged Lovecraft fans—such as that Lovecraft was a serious occultist, or that he really possessed a copy of the *Necronomicon*, or that he starved to death)—but I wonder if it can really be called *Derlethian* in the sense that Carter's *Look Behind the Cthulhu Mythos* is. I was already aware of Tierney's "The Derleth Mythos" when I wrote my book. In fact, I had already reprinted it in *Essays Lovecraftian*. I also made the point of dismissing all Derleth's "collaborations" as apocryphal, and, opening it pretty much at random (even I haven't read this book in years), I find on page 39 a careful distinction between Lovecraft's work and "The Cthulhu Mythos of Derleth and his followers", which (I would still maintain) takes a good deal of its pattern from a superficial reading of the climax of "The Dunwich Horror", wherein a learned occult savant applies the cosmic bandaid at the last minute and saves the universe. Page 37 it says that Derleth "invented the Mythos as we know it". More explicit and lengthy discussion of this (derivative of Tierney, using his phrase, p. 32 and following). There is even a dismissal of the "all my stories" quote, as best as I understood it at the time (either apocryphal or Derleth misremembering). Now I wouldn't deny that the whole book needs to be rewritten, but I don't think it can easily be categorized as a Derlethian interpretation, strictly of the old school. Had it been published a few years earlier it would have been quite radical. (As it is, I think it is a pretty good first draft of an elementary reader's guide to Lovecraft. I hope to get a chance to do the final draft of it someday.)

—Darrell Schweitzer
Strafford, PA

I rather suspect that H. P. Lovecraft would have been amused by the recent efforts to link him with Zen Buddhism, Chinese yin-yang philosophy, and, especially, both recently and not so recently, Aleister Crowley ["Aleister Crowley and H. P. Lovecraft" by Barry Leon Bender; *Lovecraft Studies*, 4, No. 1 (Spring 1985)].

It seems to me that the question of any sort of link between Lovecraft and Crowley, as explored by Barry Leon Bender in an article apparently based

largely on the work of occult writer Kenneth Grant, must come down to a question of sources, both conscious (which may be determined with some degree of probability) and unconscious (about which we may only speculate). I do not believe, and I do not believe that you believe, and I do not believe that Lovecraft would have believed that the mutual sources, if any, of Lovecraft and Crowley involve in any way telepathy, "the Akashic record", an "occult connection", or "archetypal patterns characteristic of the New Aeon". I do not think they were both sensitive to and influenced by some mysterious psychic current or by supernatural entities, Egyptian gods, antediluvian deities, etc.

Most of the items on Grant's table of correspondences, which Mr Bender quotes, are superficial if not absurd, not to mention that these few seeming parallelisms are minuscule compared to the differences in the material cited. For example, the *Necronomicon* does not (or did not, before the early 1970s) exist, was supposedly written in Arabic in the 8th century, concerns pre-human entities, and is admittedly the work of a human being. The *Book of the Law* (or *Liber AL vel Legis*) does exist, was written in English in the 20th century, concerns Egyptian gods, and was supposedly dictated by a supernatural entity. "Al" in the title *Al Azif* is the Arabic definite article; "AL" in Crowley's title has to do with his cabalistic numbering/lettering system for his magical writings.

As an example of an "absurd" correspondence, I may mention that between Lovecraft's "Azathoth" and Crowley's "Azoth". The latter is a common alchemical term, by no means exclusive to Crowley, and in fact appears as an entry in Lewis Spence's *An Encyclopaedia of Occultism*, which Lovecraft possessed. Whether "Azoth" in any way contributed to the formulation of the name "Azathoth", I do not know; but it is not the only possible source.

The other "correspondences" seem to be of a similar meaningless nature. I had thought to write an article (polemic?) discussing the parallels point by point, but, although I have a reasonably good idea of most of the sources in the case of Crowley, I lack the research material to do more than speculate in the case of Lovecraft. (By the time I became aware that Lovecraft scholarship existed, vital indexes were no longer in print.) For example, I do not even know with certainty whether the name "Gnoph-keh" occurs elsewhere in the Canon than in the Hazel Heald revision, "The Horror in the Museum", or even whether the name originated with Lovecraft or with Ms Heald. In any event, I am less than thunderstruck by the similarity between "-keh" and "-nia".

A valid comparison might have been to point out that both Lovecraft and Crowley wrote poems in honor of Pan—although the similarity ends with that bare fact, for Lovecraft's verse was written when he was no more than 12 years old, whereas Crowley's "Hymn to Pan" was written when Crowley was an adult and appears to contain strong homosexual overtones.

In any event, it seems to me that scholarship in the area of HPL/Crowley comparisons, thus far limited to occult and fictional speculation, might be better served by an investigation of mutual sources "on the material plane".

—David F. Godwin
Dallas, TX

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SCAN**

